Barbie Feminism
Feminist Pinup Girl
Brought to you by Naomi Wolf
"WOMEN AREN'T THE OPPRESSED. WE'RE RUNNING THE SHOW."
Naomi Wolf
Dallas Morning News
Dec 8, 1993
"The male body is home to me, my rocket, my whirlpool."
Naomi Wolf
We girls can do anything...
Los Angeles — Feminist author Naomi Wolf suddenly bolts from her seat in the elegant Four Seasons Hotel cafe and stomps off, her black-booted feet smacking against the carpet.
"This makes me so mad!" she says, shaking a clenched fist. "This is why I wrote this book!"
Moments before, the discussion had turned to "riot grrrls," the teen-age movement in the Pacific Northwest that mixes grunge music with feminist messages.
Ms. Wolf had expressed hope that riot grrls would be feminism's salvation in the coming century. But when she heard the grrls exclude men from their ranks to the point of refusing pamphlets to boys, she leapt to her feet.
"There's this third wave of feminists coming up, and they're making the same mistakes. They're overly demonizing men." She reminds herself to calm down ("Deep breaths") and returns to her midmorning snack of herbal and cucumber finger sandwiches.
"Sorry to get so angry. But it's sexism. We're not the oppressed. We're running the show."
Excerpted from The Dallas Morning News, December 8, 1993
These two Naomi Wolf Buttons and others are available from: Nikki Craft c/o The ACLU

Barbie Feminism Meets the Police State:
Naomi Wolf, the "Male Body," and the Selling of Women's Reality

Nikki Craft's *Barbie Feminism* leaflet is not a time capsule.
It is a diagnostic tool.

In a single page, it exposes how a particular strain of media feminism is manufactured: light, consumer-friendly, upwardly mobile, and perfectly compatible with the status quo—precisely because it does not require the status quo to change.

The genius of the leaflet is that it does not "argue" with Naomi Wolf in a polite way. It frames her. Pinup aesthetics. Barbie branding. Sloganized empowerment. Two circular "buttons" that

reduce political thought to purchasable identity. This is feminism in a form that can be sold, televised, and safely absorbed.

And then it lands the knife: not a theoretical critique, but Wolf's own words, preserved like a specimen.

I. "The Male Body Is Home to Me": A Confession Disguised as Liberation

That line—*"The male body is home to me, my rocket, my whirlpool"*—is not just cringe. It is an entire political worldview, accidentally admitted.

"Home" is where you return for safety, belonging, identity. When a woman says her home is the male body, she has confessed that her center of gravity is not women, not reality, not solidarity, not even her own body—but male presence.

This is the emotional architecture of what *Barbie Feminism* sells: the idea that feminism is a vibe you wear while remaining erotically and socially tethered to male validation. You can call yourself liberated while still treating men as shelter, fuel, and meaning.

That is not feminism.
That is rebranded dependence.

And it matters because movements do not only lose when they are attacked. They lose when their language is stolen and repackaged into a form that cannot fight.

II. "Women Aren't Oppressed—We're Running the Show": The Exit Ramp from Reality

The second button—*"WOMEN AREN'T THE OPPRESSED / WE'RE RUNNING THE SHOW"*—is the ideological getaway car.

If women are not oppressed, then male violence is merely unfortunate. Porn is "just sex." Prostitution is "choice." The police state is neutral. If women are "running the show," then power is merely an attitude—and women who cannot "run the show" must be personally defective.

This logic is not empowering. It is perfectly aligned with neoliberal cruelty. Structural harm is converted into individual failure.

Here the leaflet stops being about Naomi Wolf as a personality and becomes about a political function. Female reality is expensive. It demands attention. It demands confrontation. It demands naming coercion and accepting conflict.

Barbie Feminism offers a cheaper substitute: slogans, empowerment theater, and a feminism that can be performed in a hotel café without ever colliding with the machinery that hurts women.

III. When Feminism Went to the Market and Academia

When feminism went to the market **and academia**, it did not merely change tone. It changed conditions of accountability.

This names institutional capture, not cultural drift. Feminism became buffered by credentialed authority, professional legitimacy, and media access. What was lost was not edge but exposure: exposure to women's bodies, to material harm, to consequence.

Institutions reward movements that can be managed.

A feminism that could be taught, cited, sold, and televised required women to regulate anger, eroticize power, and stop naming men as a class. Activism—embodied, confrontational—was reframed as embarrassing, unsophisticated, or extreme.

The leaflet captures this bargain visually. Feminism learns to smile while being absorbed.

IV. Riot Grrrls and the Policing of Women's Anger

The excerpt Craft used captures Wolf's own language, which drips with contempt for women's boundary-making: young women are described as making 'mistakes' by excluding boys and 'demonizing men.'

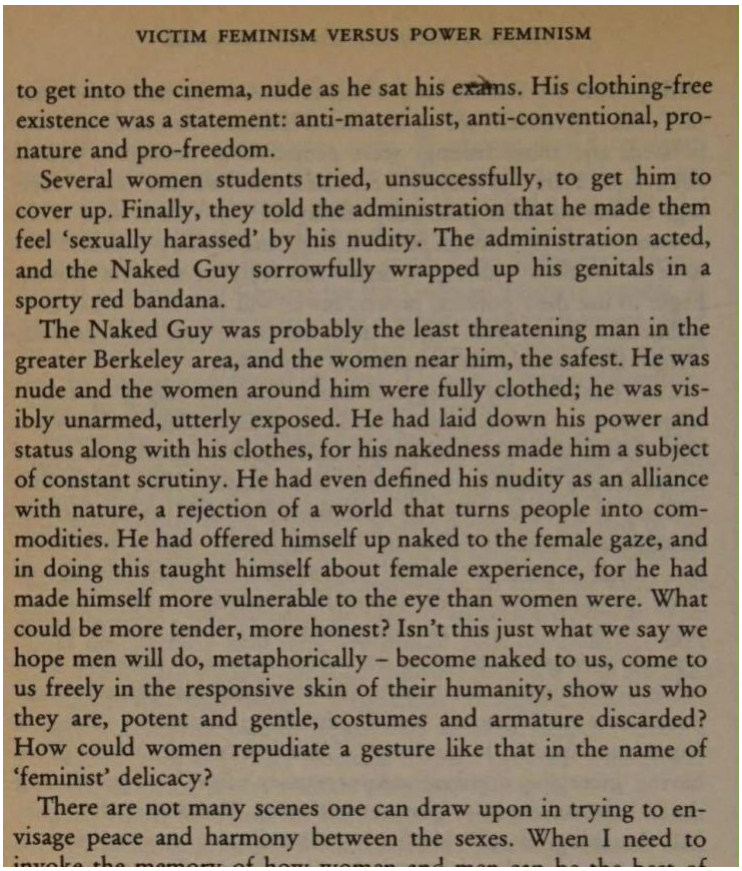
Read that again, slowly.

At the exact moment women attempt to build structures that do not orbit men, the respectable feminist voice appears to scold them back into compliance.

This is not a disagreement over tactics. It is enforcement.

Women may speak—but not in ways that cost men anything.
Women may gather—but not in ways that create female loyalty at men's expense.
Women may be angry—but briefly, and then they must perform calm.

Deep breaths. Herbal snacks. Back to girl power.



VICTIM FEMINISM VERSUS POWER FEMINISM

to get into the cinema, nude as he sat his exams. His clothing-free existence was a statement: anti-materialist, anti-conventional, pro-nature and pro-freedom.

Several women students tried, unsuccessfully, to get him to cover up. Finally, they told the administration that he made them feel 'sexually harassed' by his nudity. The administration acted, and the Naked Guy sorrowfully wrapped up his genitals in a sporty red bandana.

The Naked Guy was probably the least threatening man in the greater Berkeley area, and the women near him, the safest. He was nude and the women around him were fully clothed; he was visibly unarmed, utterly exposed. He had laid down his power and status along with his clothes, for his nakedness made him a subject of constant scrutiny. He had even defined his nudity as an alliance with nature, a rejection of a world that turns people into commodities. He had offered himself up naked to the female gaze, and in doing this taught himself about female experience, for he had made himself more vulnerable to the eye than women were. What could be more tender, more honest? Isn't this just what we say we hope men will do, metaphorically – become naked to us, come to us freely in the responsive skin of their humanity, show us who they are, potent and gentle, costumes and armature discarded? How could women repudiate a gesture like that in the name of 'feminist' delicacy?

There are not many scenes one can draw upon in trying to envisage peace and harmony between the sexes. When I need to

V. Exhibitionism and the Training of Women for Violence

This is the hinge.

Rape culture does not begin with rape.
It begins with boundary conditioning.

Public male exhibitionism—especially when framed as liberation, art, or harmless transgression—functions as rehearsal. It teaches women and girls that discomfort is prudishness, fear is overreaction, and male entitlement to space and attention is negotiable.

This is not about nudity itself.
It is about who is required to adapt.

A six-foot-four naked male exhibitionist stood in women's faces. Women objected. They did not consent. They expressed fear.

The women were vilified for it.

The man was cast as gentle, misunderstood, symbolic. His body was read metaphorically. The women's fear was read morally—as aggression, authoritarianism, cruelty.

This inversion is rape-culture pedagogy.

Later, the same man was arrested on three counts of battery and felony counts of assault with a deadly weapon after an attack at a halfway house where he was living. He allegedly killed himself in jail. Reporting noted a history of schizophrenia and combat training.

These facts do not “prove” anything retroactively. That is not the claim.

They collapse the fantasy.

The women were not hysterical.
They were not prigs.
They were reading risk accurately—and were punished for it.

VI. Discipline by Reassurance

When a feminist authority insists on her interpretation over women’s lived perception, a transfer of credibility occurs.

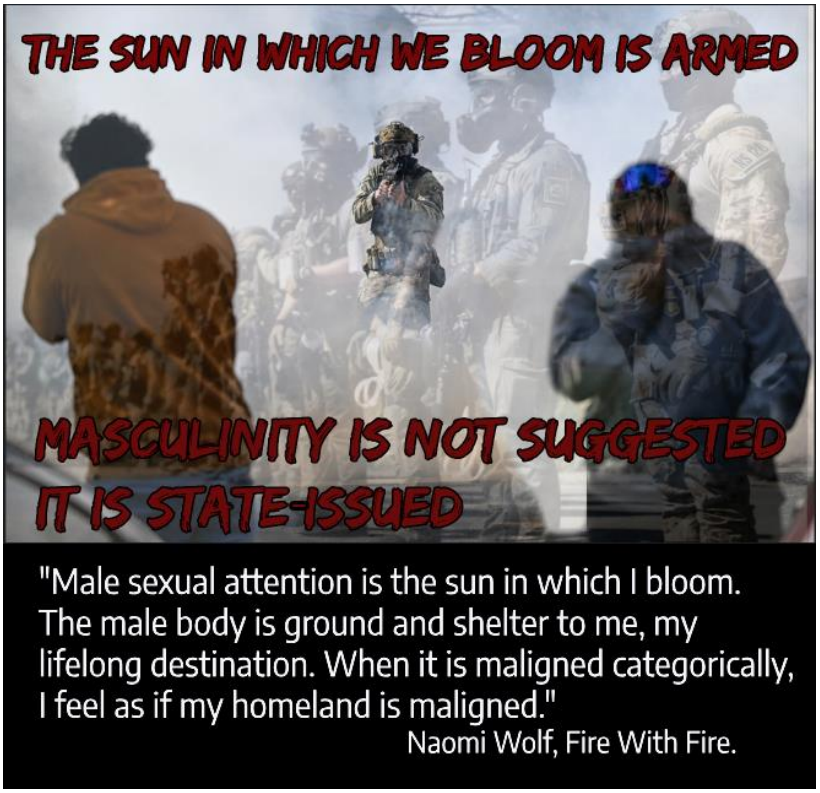
The message is unmistakable:

Trust my reading of him, not the women’s.
Fear is reactionary.
Discomfort is a moral failure.
Political maturity means overriding instinct.

This is not reassurance.
It is discipline.

Once this inversion takes hold, women no longer need to be coerced. They police themselves.

That is how rape culture is rehearsed in public.


THE SUN IN WHICH WE BLOOM IS ARMED
MASCULINITY IS NOT SUGGESTED
IT IS STATE-ISSUED
"Male sexual attention is the sun in which I bloom. The male body is ground and shelter to me, my lifelong destination. When it is maligned categorically, I feel as if my homeland is maligned."
Naomi Wolf, Fire With Fire.

VII. The Murdered Woman: Reality Reasserts Itself

A woman was murdered.

Not as metaphor.
Not as discourse.
As fact.

This is where abstraction collapses.

In climates where women are trained to override fear, violence does not announce itself politely. It arrives already normalized.

The cost of abstraction is always paid by women's bodies.

VIII. Fast-Forward: Militarized Reality

We now live inside a visibly militarized landscape. Armed state agents. Street confrontations. Spectacle as intimidation.

When feminism becomes a brand, it cannot oppose the police state. It can only comment on it.

A feminism that trained women to be nice about men cannot oppose a regime built on male force.

IX. Why This Graphic Still Matters

This work circulated hand-to-hand because no institution would publish it. That was not a limitation. It was integrity.

The image shows that feminism did not lose its way. It found one compatible with power.

A feminism that cannot name men cannot stop fascism.
A feminism that disciplines women's fear cannot protect them.
A feminism that aestheticizes domination will excuse it.

The image does not ask for agreement.
It asks for recognition.

This was already here.

Note: This essay is Part I of a three-part sequence. Part II, written by Donovan Cleckley, provides additional context about the male exhibitionist discussed above. Part III, written by Nikki Craft, continues the analysis.

Publication and Collaboration Note

This essay is published as political analysis and accountability writing.

The graphic *"Barbie Feminism Brought to You by Naomi Wolf"* is the original work of Nikki Craft, created and circulated in the early 1990s as part of feminist activist organizing.

The accompanying essay was developed through an intensive collaborative process between Nikki Craft and Quillgenie, combining Craft's archival work, lived political analysis, and historical grounding with structured argumentation and written synthesis. The analysis reflects shared authorship, responsibility, and intent.

This collaboration is named explicitly because the work demands accountability—not anonymity.